A

SERMON

PREACHED IN LAMBETH CHAPEL,

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

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LORD BISHOP OF SAINT DAVID'S,

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 15, 1766;

BY PHILIP BARTON, B. D.

CANON RESIDENTIARY OF SAINT PETER'S, EXON,

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1 TIMOTHY III. 7th Verſe, former part.

MOREOVER, HE MUST HAVE A GOOD REPORT OF THEM WHICH ARE WITHOUT.

OF the churches planted by St. Paul, Epheſus ſtands diſtinguiſhed by an eminent degree of his concern. Perhaps none had ſo large a ſhare of his perſonal attendance; "By the ſpace of three whole years he had not ceaſed to warn "every one of them night and day with tears." Abſence only increaſed his anxiety on their account. In his laſt journey to Jeruſalem, full of a melancholy preſage that he ſhould "ſee them "no more," as he could not conveniently touch at Epheſus, he ſent for their elders to attend him at Miletus, and to receive his final exhortations. The ſolemn and affecting charge delivered by him on that occaſion, the whole deſcription of the parting ſcene between the apoſtle and the biſhops of Aſia, can never be read without emotion, ſcarcely without tears. His regard for them did not terminate here, nor was it abated by his own ſufferings. He ſent them written inſtructions, to lie by them, for the regulation of their faith and practice in his abſence. He committed them to the care of Timothy, his moſt beloved diſciple and fellow-labourer, whom he left with them as the depoſitary of his goſpel, and the delegate of his authority. And, that he might omit no inſtance of expreſſing his affection both to the ſhepherd and to the flock, he found time to draw up ample directions for the government of

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that infant-church, in thoſe memorable Epiſtles to their new biſhop, which, together with his Epiſtle to Titus, have ever been conſidered as the beſt manual and directory of the chriſtian paſtor; the model by which he is to form, and the teſt by which he is to examine, his conduct. The peculiar caſt and manner of theſe Epiſtles betrays the anxious ſolicitude of the writer on the ſubject: There runs through them a vein of affection and tenderneſs, and you diſcern the ſentiments of a friend and of a father, while he is ſpeaking with all the authority of an apoſtle. How minutely doth he ſpecify the duties to be performed by every rank and degree in the miniſtry; the rocks to be ſhunned, the dangers to be encountered, the temptations to be ſurmounted? By what awful and awakening conſiderations doth he recommend to them vigilance, attention, and even an importunate aſſiduity in duty? And how is all this preſſed upon them by frequent repetitions, inculcated by the moſt vehement and paſſionate adjurations, and at laſt inforced with all the irreſiſtible endearment of a dying requeſt?

HAVING pronounced the office of a biſhop to be "a good work," he is particularly copious in enumerating the qualifications and fitneſſes for that important ſtation; he gives a long ſeries of the virtues that are requiſite to fill a place of ſuch high truſt and confidence with ſufficiency; and he cloſes all with the words I am now to conſider, "Moreover, he muſt have a good report," or an honourable teſtimony, "of them which are without." Where by "them which are without," it is obvious to underſtand the ſame perſons, whom our Saviour calls "the children of this world," ſtrangers to the light of the goſpel, whether Jews, or Heathens; in one word, the unconverted and unbelieving. Even their good opinion, much more that of believers themſelves, is regarded as neceſſary to the watchman and guardian of religion. The propriety of this mark of fitneſs may appear, and the reaſons for requiring it may receive ſome illuſtration, if it be conſidered in two diſtinct lights; firſt, as denoting a fair reputation in general;

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and ſecondly, as pointing more particularly to " them which are " without," to the ſentiments of unbelievers.

And firſt, a fair reputation in general is an ornament highly neceſſary to every miniſter of the goſpel; to one eſpecially, who occupies, or who aſpires to, an eminent ſtation in the church. Not only his peculiar obligations render it neceſſary to him, but even his ſtate and condition, as a ſocial creature, intimate it to be an acquiſition deſerving his ſerious regard. He muſt renounce all knowledge of the world and of the means of happineſs, before he can become quite indifferent to the approbation of his own ſpecies; without ſome ſhare of which, life in ſociety would be a comfortleſs and a burthenſome ſituation. In every character, in the loweſt ſtations, a good repute hath the happieſt influence on every thing we undertake: nature prompts us to ſeek it; prudence recommends, and ſcripture encourages, the purſuit. It is the ſpur and the reward of excellence, which hath ever had the greateſt power over the nobleſt and moſt exalted minds; ſo that, when men diſregard the eſteem of the world, whatever an affected philoſophy may pretend, they are not influenced by ſtrength of reaſon, but by fierceneſs and brutality of temper.

If the deſire of reputation be traced to its origin, it will be found to ſpring from an innocent and a virtuous root. Obſerve, when the love of praiſe firſt diſcovers itſelf in the tender mind; and you will diſcern it to ariſe from a ſtrong deſire of acting rightly, attended with a modeſt diſtruſt of its own judgment; with a wiſh to ſee it confirmed or corrected by maturer ſentiments; with much good-will and deference to ſuperiors, clearly expreſſed in the act of courting their approbation. Thus the deſire of eſteem is formed out of an aſſemblage of amiable qualities, all of them ſuch as virtue delights in, and regards as her moſt promiſing foundations. Whereas the man, in whom this ingenuous reliſh of honour is extinguiſhed, who hath learned to deſpiſe the opinion

and voice of the world, evidently ſhews, that he thinks meanly of mankind; and with ſuch unworthy ſentiments of our common nature, how can he avoid thinking meanly of himſelf too? He will probably be as little ſolicitous to gain the approbation of his own conſcience, as he is to ſecure the applauſe of his fellow-creatures. For the ſenſe of ſhame and of remorſe uſually ſubſiſt together; when the firſt is annihilated, the other doth not long ſurvive; and it is grown to be a vulgar obſervation, that he, who hath thrown off all regard to a good name, is uſually as little anxious to deſerve one.

But I dwell not on the reaſons, which oblige mankind in common to maintain an irreproachable character: They, who are called to ſtations of truſt and authority in the church of Chriſt, have motives peculiar to themſelves to be jealous of their reputation. For they have devoted themſelves to a ſervice, in which there is no hope or poſſibility of their ſucceeding, unleſs they preſerve, in a competent degree, the eſteem of mankind. They have undertaken to teach and to govern, offices of the moſt nice and delicate nature; ſince men very unwillingly ſubmit to be taught or governed, and need all the inducements of high opinion and perſonal veneration to counterbalance this natural reluctance. Indeed, were a mere outward obedience the great point in view, that might be ſecured, as is done in civil governments, by penalties and by power; but faith and holineſs, piety and purity, the great objects of ſpiritual rulers, are not ſubject to compulſion; they muſt be free and voluntary, or they cannot ſubſiſt at all. They are the virtues of the heart, and can only be introduced into the heart by perſuaſion and argument. Now an high opinion of the reaſoner is of the greateſt weight to procure attention to his reaſons, with thoſe who can judge of them; and it ſtands in the place of reaſon, with thoſe who cannot. If, inſtead of this, there be diſaffection to the reaſoner, if there be diſlike and even contempt of him, in vain will he expect, that what he offers will be impartially conſidered;

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in a caſe eſpecially, where the corruption of nature will plead ſtrongly againſt him; how concluſive ſoever his reaſoning may be, it will want the force, the authority, the influence, which affection and eſteem in the hearer could have given it.

This is not all. If the moſt favoured ſpeaker ſhall be found palpably to contradict himſelf, both he and his doctrines will neceſſarily fall into contempt. And this diſgrace doth every teacher incur, and, which is worſe, he brings this diſgrace on the goſpel of Chriſt, whoſe own example is at variance with his inſtructions. The inference, it muſt be owned, is weak and falſe, which undervalues a religion for the faults of a preacher, and argues that a rule is not good and holy, becauſe it is ill obſerved. But what comfort doth that reflection afford, if in the mean time the cauſe of piety ſuffers; if the miſtaken concluſion ever has prevailed, and will never ceaſe to prevail to the end of the world? For the bulk of mankind are not very capable of judging concerning rational proofs, nor do they give themſelves the trouble to conſider them; arguments, they think, may miſlead them, eloquence may deceive them; but the lives and manners of Chriſtians are an appeal to their very ſenſes: theſe make an argument they all underſtand, and never fail to apply; a real, a ſenſible, and a practical argument, which, if it doth not prove the truth or falſhood of doctrines, they think, at leaſt, a ſufficient proof of the ſincerity or inſincerity of the teacher.

Well therefore might the apoſtle demand that a biſhop ſhould be "blameleſs," that he ſhould have "an honourable teſtimony;" ſince his example, and his character, which is the echo of his example, are the chief inſtruments, by which he can hope to maintain credit and authority with his flock, and to promote religion and virtue amongſt men. If the very Heathens thought no man could be a compleat ſpeaker, even on civil and indifferent ſubjects, without being a good man; how much more will the want of mo-

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rals diſqualify a teacher of morality, whoſe powers of perſuaſion muſt be all loſt and thrown away, unleſs they are inforced by the eloquence of example? Indeed, how can he have the heart, the courage, the countenance, to exhort men to renounce their ſins, whoſe ſelf-accuſing conſcience muſt perpetually interrupt him, and tell him, that "he builds again the things that he hath deſtroyed?" How feeble and faint will be his rebukes, when he apprehends, every inſtant, that it may be ſaid to him, "Thou that teacheſt an-"other, teacheſt thou not thyſelf?" Which ſeems to be the very reaſon aſſigned in the words immediately following my text; "A "biſhop muſt have a good report—leſt he fall into reproach, and the "ſnare of the devil." He muſt have a clear reputation, leſt he incur the cenſure of hypocriſy and diſingenuity; and leſt by that means he be diſcouraged from, and deſert, his duty, and fall into other temptations.

ALL theſe inconveniences and difficulties vaniſh before the luſtre of a ſhining example. When the paſtor "ſhews himſelf in all "things a pattern of good works, he that is on the contrary part "will be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay;" and the "man of "God" himſelf may addreſs himſelf to his great taſk with all the dignity and authority, that ariſeth from conſcious merit, and from the ſatisfaction of having endeavoured, at leaſt, to diſcharge his duty. Though we ſhould ſuppoſe him deficient in talents, and even "rude "in ſpeech," example will ſupply all defects; it will ſtand in the place of learning and eloquence, and enable him, like his bleſſed Maſter, "to teach as one having authority," and "not as the ſcribes" and "diſputers of this world." Many are the requiſites to render bare inſtruction ſucceſsful; in the adviſer, ſuperior talents, great addreſs, a nice management of times and ſeaſons, and the appearance of much affection; in the adviſed, a teachable and grateful diſpoſition, an unaffected humility, great patience, and perſonal reverence for the teacher: With all theſe advantages united, both publick and private admonitions too frequently miſcarry, and fail

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of their proper effect. But examples hurt none of our weakneſſes or paſſions; they make their way into the heart unenvied and unſuſpected; they are never thought aſſuming or intruſive: the example ſpeaks, even when the lips are ſilent, and is "inſtant in "ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon," without giving offence. Its influence is irreſiſtible, becauſe it is unperceived: to act by direction or precept, ſeems to incroach on the freedom, and mortifies the pride of man; but in imitating a ſhining pattern he feels not the foreign impulſe, but has the gratification of ſuppoſing that he is determined by his own choice. Wonderful indeed is the attractive charm, wonderful the aſſimilating power, of ſuperior excellence; men ſlide imperceptibly into the habits and practices of thoſe whom they reverence; example is virtue not painted or deſcribed, but alive and animated, and hath therefore the ſame advantage over precepts, which nature hath over art, or a glowing original over a feeble copy. If its amiableneſs gives it this command over the affections, it fails not at the ſame time to engage the reaſon on its ſide by the moſt powerful and concluſive proofs; it convinceth the doubting ſinner, that the buſineſs of religion is a practicable and a ſuperable taſk; it is an evidence of fact before his eyes, to obviate an objection againſt the rules of the goſpel, which he is too apt to frame in his heart, as if they required higher perfection than our nature is enabled to attain. It is therefore of the utmoſt importance to the ſervice of religion, that the chief paſtors of the church, expoſed as they are to publick notice and obſervation, who are compared to "a city ſet on an hill," and to "a candle "that giveth light to the whole houſe," ſhould be "examples of "the believers in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in "faith, in purity:" This will crown and compleat their chriſtian labours, when their other methods of inſtruction ſhall be inforced and ſanctified by this, the moſt effectual of all, the inſtructive life and character.

If indeed the example be withdrawn from notice, if the "light "be hid under a buſhel," it will be the ſame thing with regard to the publick, as if it never exiſted. The intereſts of religion require, that it "ſhould ſhine before men;" otherwiſe "the good works "will not be ſeen," nor "the Father be glorified." It is true, to be really good is the principal requiſite, and were a paſtor to conſider himſelf only, "the anſwer of a good conſcience" might ſuffice him; but for the edification of others, ſomething farther is neceſſary; he muſt alſo appear and be thought to be good: all the influence of a viſible and acknowledged merit will be wanting to give ſucceſs to his miniſtry. Hence, in the choice of perſons to preſide in the church, the apoſtle looked out not only for intrinſick worth, but for worth atteſted and publiſhed; juſt as he calls upon us all to be thinking of "praiſe," as well as "virtue," of "the "things that are lovely and of good report," and, in another place, "to provide things honeſt," not "only in the ſight of the Lord, "but in the ſight of men." Since then a fair reputation is a qualification for this high office, in its nature and conſequences moſt important, and marked out as ſuch by St. Paul himſelf, it can never be unbecoming the watchmen and guardians of the church to ſhew a proper concern for their character, and to eſtabliſh it to advantage by every wiſe and virtuous method. Regarding it as the principal inſtrument by which they can "work the works of him "that ſent them," though they ſhould be tender of it as of the apple of an eye, though they ſhould be jealous of every injury offered to their good name, ſuch a delicate ſenſibility ought not to be imputed unto undue motives; ſince to preſerve themſelves in a capacity of doing good is neither weakneſs nor vanity, but is matter of prudence, of virtue, of duty.

There are indeed ſcripture-expreſſions which may ſeem to recommend a contrary way of thinking and acting; for inſtance, men are enjoined to be private in their devotions, and ſecret in their alms: and there are other directions of like import; all which

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are addreſſed to the Phariſees, who were remarkable for wanting the religion of the heart, and for doing their beſt actions only to be ſeen of men. Again, our Saviour denounces, "Wo unto you, "when all men ſhall ſpeak well of you;" but we are not to infer from hence, that the bare poſſeſſion of popularity is criminal: No; it naturally follows men of excellent and unaffected virtue; nor can they avoid it without becoming leſs good and leſs amiable. They only incur our Lord's cenſure, who, in imitation of "the falſe "prophets," court the applauſe of mankind by corrupt practices; who indulge and countenance a wicked generation in its ſins, who conform to the vices of the age, and "ſpeak peace" unto men, "when there is no peace." Once more, when St. Paul himſelf ſaith, "If I yet pleaſed men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt," he means only to defend himſelf from the imputation of having varied or adulterated the goſpel in compliment to the prejudices of the Jews. After all, the purſuit of general approbation, like other human purſuits, needs the curb and guard of prudence. There are, doubtleſs, many caſes, in which it may proceed from corrupt motives, may be carried to extravagant lengths, may be conducted by undue means, or may be directed to ſinful ends: and in no caſe whatever ſhould it be made the laſt end or chief ſcope of our actions, or be allowed to interfere with our duty to God. In a word, affectation, hypocriſy, vain-glory, proſtitution of conſcience, all the vices incident to the love of praiſe, are criminal and forbidden; but the deſire itſelf, in ſubſerviency to better and higher views, is generally an innocent, often a prudent, and not ſeldom a commendable ambition. It will be hardly poſſible we ſhould miſtake on this head, if we take St. Paul for our adviſer, and regulate our thoughts on this ſubject by his inſtructions, and by his conduct. "Let not your good be evil ſpoken of; Let no man deſpiſe thee;" are his directions, and they ſhew that a good name is both an acquiſition of greater value, and alſo more in our own power to ſecure, than the ſons of indiſcretion are willing to acknowledge. Whenever the favour of men is conſiſtent with the ſervice of God,

and much more, when by gaining the favour of men we can ſerve God more effectually, he recommends it to " every one of us" to " pleaſe his neighbour, for his good, to edification, giving none " offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church " of God." In all which he only preſcribes to us his own rule of action, who " gave no offence in any thing, that the miniſtry " might not be blamed; who pleaſed all men in all things, not " ſeeking his own profit, but the profit of many;" and who took every occaſion to magnify his own labours, his zeal, his diſintereſtedneſs, his ſufferings, even to, what he calls, " a fooliſhneſs of " boaſting."

But ſecondly, the mark of fitneſs inſiſted on by the apoſtle will not appear leſs reaſonable or proper, if it be conſidered, as pointing more particularly to them which are without. The perſon choſen to ſuperintend a chriſtian church was to have " a good re- " port," an honourable teſtimony of his general character, not from believers only, but from his unconverted neighbours, whether Jews or Pagans. The reaſon of which evidently was, that he might be as acceptable to them, as their acknowledged good opinion could make him. For his buſineſs lay greatly among them, and he would have a fairer proſpect of ſucceeding in his views upon them, if previouſly they entertained favourable ſentiments of him. The employment of the primitive biſhop was not only to watch over and inſtruct the converts of his diſtrict, but alſo to be always making more, " to be adding to the church daily, ſuch as " ſhould be ſaved." And if it be conſidered, that Epheſus was a city of the firſt rank for opulence and numbers; and that, at the time of writing this Epiſtle, the chriſtians were but few, in proportion to the body of the inhabitants; it will be owned that the harveſt was large and inviting, and that the choice of miſſionaries was a point worthy of St. Paul's ſerious conſideration. He ſeems to have foreſeen with what advantage his meſſengers would be heard, whether as reporters of facts, or as preachers of doctrines,

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if they were allowed by unbelievers themſelves to be men of unqueſtioned probity and integrity, incapable of any attempt to deceive. In this he only copied the methods of Providence in his own converſion. Though Heaven was at the expence of miracle after miracle to reclaim this zealous perſecutor; yet, when an human inſtrument was to be employed in the ſame ſervice, God ſeems to have condeſcended to St. Paul's prejudices in the deſignation of a meſſenger. For we read of Ananias, that, though a chriſtian diſciple, he "was a devout man, and had a good report of all the "Jews which dwelt at Damaſcus;" a circumſtance, which poſſibly contributed to render his meſſage more credible.

ADD to this, that to "have a good report" amongſt their unbelieving neighbours afforded a ſtrong preſumption of real and genuine worth; it was, in truth, an evidence far more valid than a reputation confined to the narrow circle of their own communion. It is common enough to ſee a leader of a religious ſect idolized by his own followers; but that is a reſpectable character indeed, which hath the acknowledgment of adverſaries in its favour, and extorts applauſe from the votaries of an oppoſite worſhip. It is well known in how diſagreeable a light the firſt chriſtians in general were very early regarded both by Jews and Gentiles; ſeen through the medium of religious prejudice, of all prepoſſeſſions the moſt violent, they were objects of ſcorn, of averſion, of horror. At Rome, hiſtorians tell us, they were convicted and puniſhed as incendiaries, not from any evidence of the fact, but becauſe the univerſal abhorrence they lay under diſpoſed people to believe them capable of the worſt enormities: and we need look no farther than ACTS xix. to find how the caſe ſtood at Epheſus itſelf. We read there, that the ſilver-ſmiths, apprehending a ſtagnation of their trade, imputed the evil to the chriſtians; but, as their own paltry intereſts were hardly ſufficient to excite a general odium againſt the believers, they had the addreſs to propagate a clamour more adequate to their purpoſe; they perſuaded the zealous mul-

titude, that the majeſty of their religion itſelf was in danger from this new ſect, which had the impiety to teach, " that they be no " gods, which are made with hands." The populace were inflamed, and would hear no apology; for hours together their continued cry was, " Great is Diana of the Epheſians;" and it may eaſily be gueſſed, how they ſtood affected to the poor chriſtians. But now, if any of theſe hated and obnoxious men had ſuch pure and unſullied characters, as, notwithſtanding the bias of intereſt and ſuperſtition united, to command reſpect even from Demetrius and his craftſmen, this would be the cleareſt proof of uncommon merit; it would be ſuch a triumph over malice and obloquy, as the moſt diſtinguiſhed virtue but rarely enjoys.

Such a victory, in circumſtances not unlike, was gained by the chriſtians of an entire province, half a century later. The caſe in view at Epheſus grew to be the caſe in fact in Bithynia. Private avarice and publick prejudice had both reaſon to be alarmed at the amazing increaſe of believers, and the tottering ſituation of idolatry; the pagan temples were almoſt deſerted; the dealers in victims were half ruined, for no one would purchaſe. In theſe circumſtances, Pliny the governor, who, with all his candour, certainly owed the chriſtians no good-will, were it only for the trouble and perplexity they gave him, undertook to make a ſtrict enquiry into the tenets and practices of a religion, which ſeemed the cauſe of ſo many diſorders. Accordingly he put believers to the torture, he ſought information from apoſtates: and the reſult of all was, as he very ingenuouſly declares to the emperor and to poſterity, that he found the lives of the chriſtians to be blameleſs and virtuous, and their rites innocent and edifying. Is it poſſible, that any plea urged by the early apologiſts, any allegation from within the pale of the church, ſhould ſpeak with ſuch force and effect in behalf of the chriſtians, as did this honourable teſtimony from an adverſary who was " without?" I conclude therefore, that St. Paul, in requiring the atteſtation of thoſe who were not chriſtians to prove

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the value of thoſe who were, propoſed ſuch a teſt as was indiſputable: that he demanded the cleareſt evidence of a virtuous and exemplary conduct, which the nature of the thing would admit, conſiſtently with human fallibility.

One would ſcarcely expect that, what the apoſtle eſteemed to be an eſſential recommendation of a biſhop, ſhould in future ages be imputed to any of the order, as a reproach. Yet it cannot be diſſembled, that ſomething like this perverſeneſs hath appeared. In theſe happy climes of freedom and toleration, there are bodies of chriſtian and proteſtant brethren, who explain ſome doctrines differently from the church eſtabliſhed, who ſeparate from her communion, and are diſaffected to her diſcipline and government epiſcopal; others there are (which is far more melancholy), "aliens" to all intents, who have "made ſhipwreck of the faith," who diſbelieve and deſpiſe the ſcriptures, and "deny the Lord that bought "them." When theſe, whether ſeparatiſts or infidels, have thought juſtly and ſpoken honourably of the venerable fathers of our church, equity and candour would regard this as an involuntary tribute of applauſe paid to ſuperior excellence; and would rejoice in contemplating that brightneſs of character, which hath been able to break through the clouds of prejudice. Whereas, in angry times and by angry men, it hath been turned into an argument of guilt: praiſe from ſuch an obnoxious quarter hath been ſuppoſed to impart a ſtain to the receiver: it hath been conſidered as a ſymptom, not of health, but of infection: injurious ſuſpicions have been harboured, that, where theſe commendations have been beſtowed on one ſide, there muſt have been undue favour and partiality on the other; as if it were impoſſible to gain a man's goodwill without ſharing in his errors. Much might be ſaid in reply to ſuch invidious inſinuations. St. Paul certainly reaſoned in a very different manner; in the good opinion entertained of the Epheſian converts by Jews or Pagans, he diſcovered no latent Judaiſm or Idolatry; and calumny itſelf reaſons differently in parallel caſes.

For

For inſtance, there have been prelates of the Romiſh church, who have been highly and juſtly eſteemed by the reformed; there have been divines of the ſeparation, who have been greatly and deſervedly valued by the eſtabliſhed clergy; and no one, I preſume, will deny, that they, who have merited the admiration of oppoſite communions, have been the moſt ſhining ornaments of their own. Better would it become us from ſuch incidents and occaſions, inſtead of indulging unfriendly ſuggeſtions, to congratulate ourſelves on the mildneſs and moderation of the times, and (if we muſt not rejoice in the ſoothing, but perhaps diſtant, proſpect of ſuch an entire union among chriſtians, as may make us all "one fold under one Shepherd") to pleaſe ourſelves at leaſt with with the hope, that religious animoſity may utterly ſubſide, and that there may be no other ſtrife among Proteſtants, but that friendly and glorious contention, who ſhall beſt adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

To conclude — If the good opinion and eſteem of men be a point of ſuch importance and neceſſity to ſpiritual rulers; if it be one of their engines of government, perhaps the moſt powerful they have left; every well-wiſher to our Sion will be careful not to weaken their hands by lightly encouraging reports to their diſadvantage. There are ſome who affect a jealouſy of church-power in every ſhape; a jealouſy, which hath long outlived its firſt cauſes and occaſions. Let not even theſe undermine ſuch authority, as they muſt acknowledge to be innocent, unſuſpected, inoffenſive; an authority, which encroaches on no rights, which exacts no unwilling obedience, which governs, not by ſtripes and terror, but by the moſt liberal and ingenuous motives; the laſt and ſupplemental authority of an high and illuſtrious character. Injurious accuſation can never be that "ſuperabundant love and eſteem," which St. Paul conjures us to pay to "thoſe that labour among us, "and are over us in the Lord;" and unmerited ſlander is widely different from that "double honour," of which he declares "the

"elders

" elders that rule well to be worthy." On the contrary, ſuppoſing them to merit cenſure, he allows it not to be inflicted without a ſingular exactneſs and ſolemnity in the proceſs; " Againſt an elder " receive not an accuſation, but before two or three witneſſes:" imputations ſhould never be fixed on them without the cleareſt evidence; becauſe the injury doth not terminate in their perſons, but brings a reproach on the church, weakens diſcipline, and diſſerves religion; as, on the other hand, the honours that are deſervedly paid to them reflect a luſtre on the communion of which they are members, and on the faith which they profeſs.

It might be hoped, their ſituation might be beheld without envy; let the eſtimate of it be fairly taken, and the account impartially balanced, and it will be ſeen how little food all their grandeur affords to the workings of that reſtleſs paſſion. If men will envy them thoſe honours and emoluments that ſtrike the eye, why do they not likewiſe envy them their cares and labours which lie behind the ſcene; their anxieties and diſquiets, their confinements and interruptions, and the ſacrifices they make of time, and health, and eaſe, and domeſtick comfort, to the important duties of their ſtation? They, who have had opportunities of inſpecting it moſt nearly, well know the epiſcopal chair to be a ſeat of thorns; ſo much the more uneaſy and galling, by how much it is more worthily and conſcientiouſly filled. Painful pre-eminence! ſo far is it from being a proper object of envy, of ambition, or competition; ſo far are the little advantages and diſtinctions attending it from compenſating its toils and embarraſſments, that this world hath no equivalent to give for them. It muſt be an aſſured expectation of a far higher recompence, that can either move a wiſe and good man deliberately to undertake, or enable him to acquit himſelf happily of, a taſk ſo burthenſome and difficult in its performance, ſo weighty in its conſequences, and ſo dangerous and dreadful in its neglect or miſmanagement. It muſt be the hope, that after " taking heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghoſt

" hath

" hath made him overſeer, after feeding the church of God, " which he hath purchaſed with his own blood, there is laid up " for him a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous " Judge ſhall give him;" that at the head of ſaints and converts, made ſuch by his influence and inſtruction, he may ſtill preſerve his dignity and precedence in that better ſtate, where " the wiſe " ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn " many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever."

FINIS.